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Washington LABOR MARKET

June 1990

Washington State
Employment Security

Isiah Turner
Commissioner

Prepared by the
Labor Market And
Economic Analysis Branch
(206) 438-4800

Gary Bodeutsch
Director

In cooperation with the
Employment and Training
Administration
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Highlights

Easing Up On The Reins

The heat is down. Washington's economy proceeds to expand but at a pace which definitely showed signs of easing over the past couple months. May employment heightened only seasonally and unemployment inched higher at a time when the rate should typically be dropping off. Basic manufacturing, long considered the principal driver of the economy, has shifted from basically pacing the economy to essentially no-growth. Substantial carry-over, meanwhile, continues to drive the services economy higher. But disallowing the short-lived impact of federal census hires takes even this down a peg or two.

Not to worry. The economy is only slowing, not retrenching. And from a very high base. Most of the industries are holding their own. In fact, the employment pattern, with the singular exception of aerospace, is

Volume 14, Number 6

drifting only in relative terms compared to the extraordinary experience of the past couple years. Moreover, thanks to a degree of economic diversity which has crept in gradually over time, sizable offsets are now in vogue which were not present previously. Continuation of the hectic job growth which propelled the state to third highest in the nation last year would surely overwhelm the infrastructure if allowed to proceed indefinitely. A breather is good news.

LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Washington's unemployment rate moved up fractionally from a 20-year low of 5.2 percent in April to 5.3 percent in May. The month-to-month movement was not deemed significant. However, the uptick did stand at odds with a normal downward pattern for the period. Labor markets throughout most of the metropolitan areas remained reasonably tight. Seattle-Everett continued to hover at 3.8 percent – the lowest jobless rate for the two-county area of any month since 1968. Unemployment statewide was down half a percentage point from 5.8 percent a year before and registered within bounds of the 5.1 percent national average for May.

Historically, there has been a gap averaging roughly one to two percentage points between the state and the national jobless rates. At the peak of the recession in 1982, the difference widened to nearly three percentage points. The reasons are quite simple. Washington has a much larger than national incidence of seasonal industries which make for greater vacillations of unemployment during the course of the year. In addition, the structure of the industrial base is heavily weighted toward the level of outlays for capital equipment which tend to lag the business cycle both on the up and downside. Recent strong job growth in the state has effectively narrowed the spread.

Resident Civilian Labor Force

Employment and Unemployment in Washington State

	May 1990 *Preliminary*	Apr 1990 *Revised*	May 1989
Resident Civilian Labor Force	2,525,200	2,537,900	2,481,100
Employment	2,391,800	2,405,100	2,335,900
Unemployment	133,400	132,800	145,100
Unemployment Rate	5.3	5.2	5.8
National Unemployment Rate	5.1	5.2	5.0

Data in this table are not seasonally adjusted.
Sources: Employment Security Department; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS

Washington's employment base heightened seasonally in May. For most industries the month-to-month movement looked fairly typical. Food processing, construction, services, and trade all moved in tandem with higher levels of springtime activity. In addition, the government sector was boosted inordinately over the month by further buildup for the 1990 Census of Population. These typical and non-typical events served in essence to provide significant offset for counter moves in lumber and wood products and aircraft manufacturing.

The net result drove total nonfarm employment up 22,100. The gain was within striking distance of the most recent five-year average for the month but significantly lighter than the 31,300 posted in May of last year. Moreover, if the extraordinary 4,600 census hires are removed, the change for the "real economy" in May dropped to 17,500 – the lowest since 1985. Manufacturing, on balance, showed absolutely no zip. Payrolls in the lumber and wood products industry actually fell off on a seasonally adjusted basis and worker levels in the aircraft industry were scaled back in May for the fifth consecutive month.

Manufacturing Holds Level

Loss of momentum in manufacturing has been confined specifically to aircraft and logging. The rest of manufacturing has been little affected. Electronics and instruments production is basically holding its own. Likewise, heavy machinery and fabricated metals. Thanks to added capacity put in place over the past year, food

processing proceeds to build seasonally on a higher than year-ago base. And chemicals is drawing higher after dropping throughout much of 1987-88 as additional environmental restoration work gets underway at Hanford.

Further pullback in aircraft manufacturing dropped employment in that industry another 800 in May. Year-to-date adjustments now measure on the order of 3,000. Another 2,600 are expected in the second half. Most of this reflects productivity gains coming out of the 747-400 production process which has reduced per unit labor requirements. Defense cutbacks are part of the equation. But for Boeing these figure less than for other major defense contractors in view of the preponderance of workload held in the commercial field. Order backlog of the company has proceeded to build in 1990 atop an industry record exceeding $90 billion.

Owing to unseasonably warm weather early in the year, resource based activity in the first quarter essentially borrowed from the second quarter. Employment in logging, for example, stood 750 workers higher than a year before on average in January through March. By May, that figure was off by 400. The quick jump start was not just weather related, however. Strong export demand and desire to build inventories also figured into the action. As a result, the lumber and wood products industry has held steady rather than showing any seasonal increase over the past couple months. Payrolls inched up by 200 in May at a time when something on the order of 1,000 would logically have been expected.

Nonmanufacturing Boosts The Total

Into the breach has come the services economy. Nonmanufacturing employment growth of 21,800 over the month more than compensated for any lackluster performance in manufacturing. Warmer spring time weather boosted payrolls in construction (+4,100), services (+2,500), and trade (+7,100). The additions were pretty much across the board with particular strength among special trade contractors and eating and drinking establishments. At the same time, further census hirings drove up federal government in May by 4,600 to a cumulative total of 8,000 for the year to date.

On the flip side, business services, which exploded at an exponential rate in recent years, appeared to have slowed. Employment mounted by 300 between April and May this year compared to 1,500 in the like period last year. If indeed the purchase of temporary help services quickens as overall demand rises, it follows that the pace would also lead as the economy begins to ease.

Over-The-Year Continues Strong

Year-to-year, Washington's nonfarm employment in May was up 99,200 or 4.9 percent. The spread narrowed from 108,300 in April and disallowing the 8,000 census workers would register closer to 91,200 or 4.5 percent. Even this latter pace, however, registers better than double the national average and the state's own long run historical trend. Services (+26,100) and trade (+25,600) have accounted for fully half the total job gain. Construction has added 11,900; government, 21,500; and manufacturing, 3,900.

Given the widespread loss nationally in manufacturing, it is quite remarkable that Washington's principal goods-producing sector continues to post a 12-month gain. Transportation equipment still holds an 1,100 worker edge over a year earlier. And both food processing and electronic equipment manufacturing were higher by 500 in May. Fabricated metals were up 700 but primary metals, the major input, was off by 400. Also lower were lumber and wood products (-800) and textiles and apparel (-300). The resurgence at Hanford, meanwhile, has managed to boost payrolls in the chemicals and allied products sector by 1,000.

AREA TRENDS

Metropolitan Medley

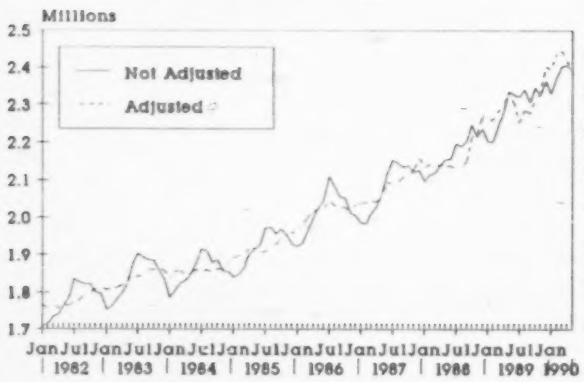
On balance, the state's metropolitan areas showed no change in unemployment in May at 4.8 percent of the urban workforce. But the average was derived from a mixture of offsetting entries. Seattle-Everett remained unchanged at a low 3.8 percent. Both Tacoma and Spokane inched higher: the former from 5.1 percent to

5.3 percent and the latter from 5.7 percent to 5.8 percent. Most of the other urban labor areas followed suit with the exception of Bellingham, which dropped from 5.4 percent to 5.2 percent, and Yakima, which moved lower from 11.4 percent to 10. 2 percent. Joblessness on average measured better than half a percentage point less than a year before.

Seasonals Inch Higher

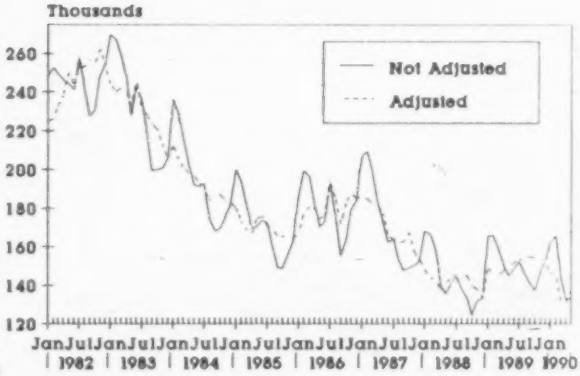
Meanwhile, the resource-based economies heightened. Unemployment in the logging areas of western Washington scaled back from 8.4 percent to 8.0 percent in May. And the agricultural economies of eastern Washington moved in tandem, dropping from 7.8 percent to 7.6 percent on average. Highs and lows for the month ranged from 17.6 percent in Adams County to 2.5 percent in San Juan County.

State Total Resident Employment
January 1982-May 1990



Source: Employment Security Department

State Total Resident Unemployment
January 1982-May 1990



Source: Employment Security Department

INDUSTRY NOTES

Over There, Over There ...

Washington continues to fly in the face of national trends with respect to foreign trade. While the nation struggles with what appears to be an endless trade

deficit, the state of Washington last year posted its largest international trade surplus in history. Thanks largely to increased business with western Europe, Washington-made exports jumped 39 percent in 1989 to a record $19.5 billion. The value of imports was estimated at $7.1 billion.

Understandably, much of the export gain was propelled by transportation equipment, including aircraft, boats, and trucks, which accounted for $11.3 billion or 58 percent of total outshipments. Other contributors included aluminum, wheat, and timber, together with the growing high-tech industries which provide computer software, medical equipment, microelectronics, and test and measurement instruments.

Threatened It Is

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially declared the northern spotted owl a threatened species on June 22, 1990. Potential implications to the forest products industry are enormous. Logging could be banned across half the unprotected old-growth forests in the Pacific Nortwest – roughly 3 million acres – if recommendations of the Interagency Scientific Commission are officially adopted. This agency has determined the probable loss to the state of Washington of that action at roughly 20,000 direct and indirect jobs.

North, East, South ... Wherever

With construction either planned or underway currently at Auburn, Renton, and Spokane, the Boeing Company has announced further plans to build two additional plants in adjacent Pierce County at a cost of $400 million. The two facilities, one south of Tacoma and the other in Puyallup, will initially employ 570 workers when opened in mid-1992. Operations to be shifted revolve around wing parts and tool grinding. Capacity to meet record backlogs has become a central issue.

NATIONAL INDICATORS

Leading Us Sideways

The government's key economic forecasting index rose solidly in May after declining slightly in April. This kind of see-saw action has been in vogue since the beginning of the year, leading many economists to perceive little more than slow growth for the economy for the foreseeable future. In the second about-face in four months, the index of leading indicators jumped 0.8 percent, more than recouping the 0.1 percent drop a month before.

Encouragingly, both average work week of factory workers and manufacturers' orders for capital and consumer goods increased, giving a hint that the beleaguered manufacturing sector might be picking up. Declines centered in housing and consumer buying expectations.

Housing On The Rocks

As further followup, total housing starts sank 1.4 percent in May to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.20 million units – the lowest since the recession in late-1982. A slowdown in job growth throughout much of the nation, high interest rates, and a credit crunch in some areas are all contributing factors. Meanwhile, the inventory of unsold homes continues to climb. Construction of single-family homes fell 1 percent in May; apartments and other multi-family dwellings were off a larger 2.5 percent.

Higher But Heartening Prices

Producer prices moved up 0.3 percent in May, reversing a three month decline. But analysts were heartened by the modest degree of movement. Energy prices continued to plunge thereby offsetting higher food costs. Over the first five months of the year, overall inflation at the wholesale level was running at a 4.0 percent annual rate, down from 4.8 percent for all of 1989.

At the consumer level, prices in May rose 0.2 percent, matching the increase for April. Food prices rose only 0.1 percent; energy costs dropped 0.7 percent; and prices excluding the volatile food and energy sectors

were up a moderate 0.3 percent. The overall index heightened to 129.2 percent of the 1982-84 base in May, an increase of 4.4 percent from a year ago.

Consumer Price Index

(All items, Urban Consumers, 1982-1984 = 100)

	Indexes			% Change From	
U.S. City Average	May 90 129.2	Apr 90 128.9	May 89 123.8	Apr 90 0.2%	May 89 4.4%
Seattle†	Jul-Dec 1989 119.6	Jul-Dec 1988 113.8		Jan-Jun 1988 5.1%	

†The index for Seattle reflects prices in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties.
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Nonagricultural Wage & Salary Workers in Washington State, Place of Work[1]

(In Thousands) (Not Seasonally Adjusted)

Industry	May 1990 (Prel)	Apr 1990 (Rev)	May 1989 (Rev)	Apr 1989 (Rev)	Numeric Change: Apr 1990 to May 1990	Numeric Change: May 1989 to May 1990
TOTAL NONAG. WAGE AND SALARY	2,141.2	2,119.1	2,042.0	2,010.8	22.1	99.2
MANUFACTURING	363.7	363.4	359.8	353.6	0.3	3.9
Durable Goods	258.5	258.9	256.3	252.5	-0.4	2.2
Lumber & Wood Products	40.6	40.4	41.4	40.3	0.2	-0.8
Furniture & Fixtures	4.3	4.2	3.9	3.9	0.1	0.4
Stone, Clay & Glass	7.9	7.7	7.6	7.3	0.2	0.3
Primary Metals	12.8	12.9	13.2	13.1	-0.1	-0.4
Aluminum	8.8	8.8	9.0	8.9	0.0	-0.2
Fabricated Metals	12.2	11.9	11.5	11.2	0.3	0.7
Industrial Machinery & Equipment	19.4	19.3	19.1	18.7	0.1	0.3
Electronic & Other Electrical Equipment	12.0	12.0	11.5	11.5	0.0	0.5
Transportation Equipment	128.7	129.8	127.3	125.9	-1.1	1.4
Aircraft and Parts	113.3	114.1	112.2	110.8	-0.8	1.1
Instruments & Related	14.8	14.8	14.9	14.8	0.0	-0.1
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	5.8	5.9	5.9	5.8	-0.1	-0.1
Nondurable Goods	105.2	104.5	103.5	101.1	0.7	1.7
Food & Kindred Products	36.4	35.8	35.9	34.1	0.6	0.5
Preserved Fruits & Vegetables	13.0	12.6	13.3	12.0	0.4	-0.3
Textiles, Apparel & Leather	7.4	7.5	7.7	7.6	-0.1	-0.3
Paper & Allied Products	18.2	18.3	18.1	18.0	-0.1	0.1
Printing & Publishing	22.1	21.9	21.6	21.4	0.2	0.5
Chemicals & Allied Products	13.0	12.9	12.0	11.9	0.1	1.0
Petroleum, Coal, Plastics	8.1	8.1	8.2	8.1	0.0	-0.1
MINING & QUARRYING	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.5	0.1	0.1
CONSTRUCTION	117.5	113.4	105.6	100.9	4.1	11.9
TRANSP.,COMM. & UTILITIES	111.4	110.2	106.1	105.3	1.2	5.3
WHOLESALE & RETAIL TRADE	523.7	516.6	498.1	488.9	7.1	25.6
Wholesale Trade	131.2	130.0	124.0	121.3	1.2	7.2
Retail Trade	392.5	386.6	374.1	367.6	5.9	18.4
General Merchandise	38.0	37.7	36.7	36.0	0.3	1.3
Food Stores	66.8	65.8	62.7	61.4	1.0	4.1
Eating & Drinking	143.0	139.7	136.1	133.8	3.3	6.9
FINANCE, INS., & REAL ESTATE	116.2	115.8	111.4	110.2	0.4	4.8
Finance	52.9	52.9	50.5	50.3	0.0	2.4
SERVICES	499.0	496.5	472.9	467.5	2.5	26.1
Hotels & Lodging	26.5	25.9	24.3	23.6	0.6	2.2
Business Services	81.5	81.2	76.0	74.6	0.3	5.5
Health Services	148.5	147.2	140.0	138.8	1.3	8.5
Hospitals	49.0	48.5	46.2	45.7	0.5	2.8
GOVERNMENT	405.9	399.5	384.4	380.9	6.4	21.5
Federal	79.5	74.9	71.6	71.5	4.6	7.9
State	116.3	116.3	112.0	111.3	0.0	4.3
State Education	62.0	62.2	60.1	59.3	-0.2	1.9
Local	210.1	208.3	200.8	198.1	1.8	9.3
Local Education	112.3	111.7	109.4	108.9	0.6	2.9
LABOR-MANAGEMENT DISPUTES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

[1]Excludes proprietors, self-employed, members of armed forces, and private household employees. Includes all full- and part-time wage and salary workers receiving pay during the pay period including the 12th of the month.

Washington State
Employment Security Department
Labor Market and Economic Analysis

Resident Labor Force and Employment in Washington State and Labor Market Areas

Date: 7/3/90
Benchmark: 1989

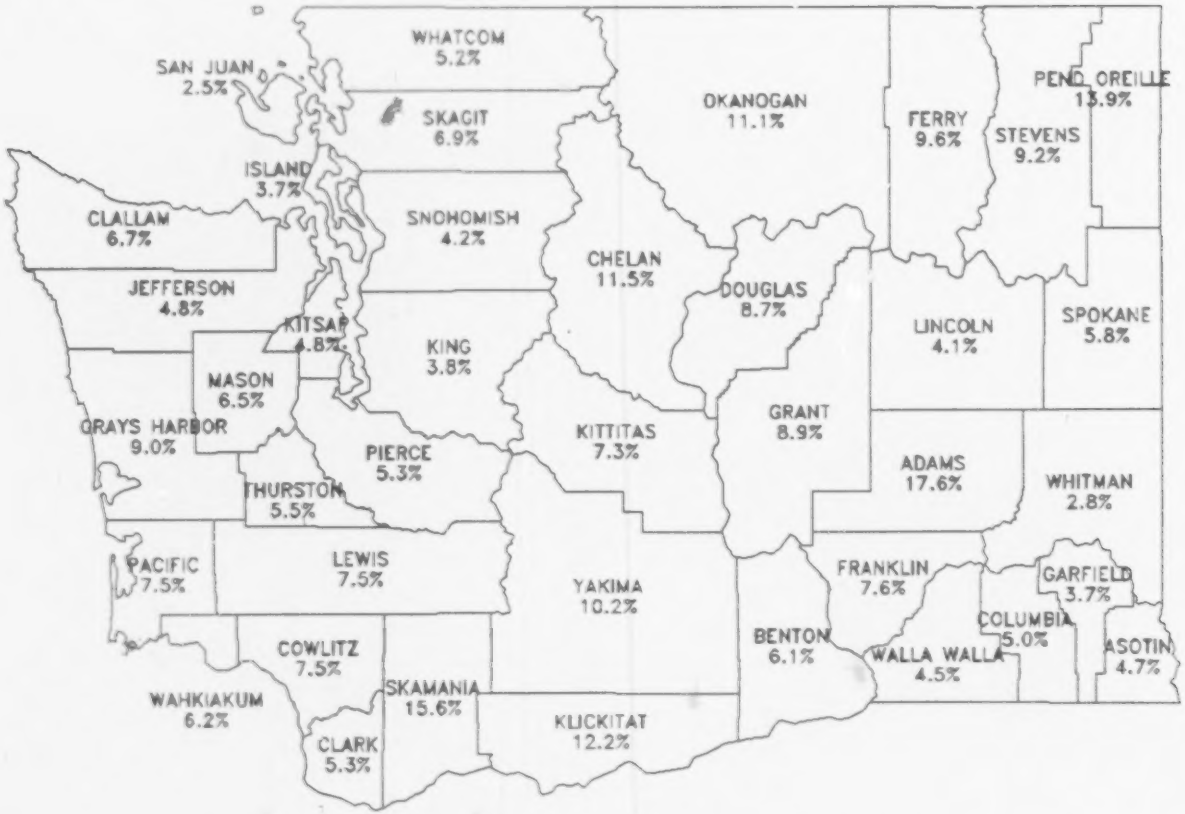
Not Seasonally Adjusted

	May 1990 Preliminary†				April 1990 Revised†				May 1989 Revised†			
	Labor Force	Employ-ment	Unemploy-ment	Unemploy-ment Rate	Labor Force	Employ-ment	Unemploy-ment	Unemploy-ment Rate	Labor Force	Employ-ment	Unemploy-ment	Unemploy-ment Rate
Washington State Total	2,525,200	2,391,800	133,400	5.3	2,537,900	2,405,100	132,800	5.2	2,481,000	2,335,900	145,100	5.8
Bellingham MSA	67,100	63,600	3,500	5.2	68,600	64,900	3,700	5.4	65,800	61,600	4,200	6.4
Bremerton MSA	81,100	77,200	3,900	4.8	82,000	78,200	3,800	4.6	80,000	75,900	4,100	5.1
Olympia MSA	83,700	79,100	4,600	5.5	84,000	79,600	4,400	5.2	81,000	76,300	4,700	5.8
Seattle PMSA	1,137,900	1,094,100	43,800	3.8	1,146,400	1,103,300	43,100	3.8	1,112,700	1,060,400	52,300	4.7
King County‡	898,300	864,500	33,800	3.8	904,600	871,700	32,900	3.6	878,700	837,800	40,900	4.7
Snohomish County‡	239,800	229,700	10,100	4.2	241,800	231,600	10,200	4.2	233,900	222,600	11,300	4.8
Spokane MSA	173,000	162,900	10,100	5.8	174,000	164,100	9,900	5.7	173,900	163,500	10,400	6.0
Tacoma PMSA	260,600	246,700	13,900	5.3	263,300	250,000	13,300	5.1	255,200	239,300	15,900	6.2
Tri-Cities MSA	77,500	72,500	5,000	6.5	74,500	69,700	4,800	6.4	76,500	71,000	5,500	7.2
Benton County‡	60,500	56,800	3,700	6.1	57,900	54,600	3,300	5.7	59,300	55,600	3,700	6.2
Franklin County‡	17,100	15,800	1,300	7.6	16,700	15,200	1,500	9.0	17,300	15,400	1,900	11.0
Vancouver PMSA	126,700	120,000	6,700	5.3	128,100	121,400	6,700	5.2	123,800	117,000	6,800	5.5
Yakima MSA	100,600	90,300	10,300	10.2	101,300	89,800	11,500	11.4	100,600	90,300	10,300	10.2
Adams	7,500	6,180	1,320	17.6	6,840	6,130	710	10.4	7,230	6,660	570	7.9
Asotin	10,210	9,730	480	4.7	10,060	9,650	410	4.1	9,680	9,220	460	4.8
Clallam	24,090	22,480	1,610	6.7	24,270	22,560	1,710	7.0	24,570	22,720	1,850	7.5
Columbia	3,170	3,010	160	5.0	3,080	2,850	230	7.5	3,010	2,830	180	6.0
Cowlitz	38,940	36,030	2,910	7.5	39,260	36,220	3,040	7.7	38,510	35,750	2,760	7.2
Ferry	3,340	3,020	320	9.6	3,390	2,990	400	11.8	3,320	2,910	410	12.3
Garfield	1,070	1,030	40	3.7	1,030	1,000	30	2.9	1,100	1,070	30	2.7
Grant	27,290	24,870	2,420	8.9	26,350	24,110	2,240	8.5	27,490	25,260	2,230	8.1
Grays Harbor	28,000	25,470	2,530	9.0	28,220	25,660	2,560	9.1	27,330	24,990	2,340	8.6
Island	22,260	21,440	820	3.7	22,190	21,320	870	3.9	21,430	20,510	920	4.3
Jefferson	8,940	8,510	430	4.8	8,960	8,520	440	4.9	8,650	8,240	410	4.7
Kittitas	12,170	11,280	890	7.3	12,370	11,310	1,060	8.6	12,130	11,030	1,100	9.1
Klickitat	8,680	7,620	1,060	12.2	8,420	7,270	1,150	13.7	8,200	7,250	950	11.6
Lewis	27,070	25,040	2,030	7.5	26,930	24,950	1,980	7.4	26,080	24,070	2,010	7.7
Lincoln	4,430	4,250	180	4.1	4,290	4,090	200	4.7	4,570	4,400	170	3.7
Mason	14,210	13,280	930	6.5	14,050	13,100	950	6.8	13,870	12,910	960	6.9
Okanogan	16,470	14,650	1,820	11.1	16,480	14,510	1,970	12.0	16,520	14,680	1,840	11.1
Pacific	7,910	7,320	590	7.5	7,860	7,250	610	7.8	7,600	6,940	660	8.7
Pend Oreille	3,320	2,860	460	13.9	3,350	2,840	510	15.2	5,510	5,100	410	7.4
San Juan	6,020	5,870	150	2.5	5,860	5,690	170	2.9	6,020	5,790	230	3.8
Skagit	39,160	36,450	2,710	6.9	39,860	37,050	2,810	7.0	36,570	33,620	2,950	8.1
Skamania	2,180	1,840	340	15.6	2,260	1,860	400	17.7	2,300	1,960	340	14.8
Stevens	12,370	11,230	1,140	9.2	12,470	11,080	1,390	11.1	12,290	11,280	1,010	8.2
Wahkiakum	1,290	1,210	80	6.2	1,330	1,240	90	6.8	1,290	1,220	70	5.4
Walla Walla	25,690	24,540	1,150	4.5	25,480	24,020	1,460	5.7	25,900	24,670	1,230	4.7
Wenatchee Labor Area	40,840	36,510	4,330	10.6	40,830	36,800	4,030	9.9	40,960	36,780	4,180	10.2
Chelan County‡	27,360	24,210	3,150	11.5	27,390	24,400	2,990	10.9	27,290	24,380	2,910	10.7
Douglas County‡	13,490	12,310	1,180	8.7	13,440	12,400	1,040	7.7	13,680	12,400	1,280	9.4
Whitman	20,330	19,770	560	2.8	20,400	20,050	350	1.7	19,520	18,890	630	3.2

†Official U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics data. ‡Estimates are determined by using the Population/Claims Share disaggregation methodology. Note: Detail may not add due to rounding.

MAY 1990 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

STATE OF WASHINGTON = 5.3%



Estimated Average Hours and Earnings of Production Workers in Manufacturing and of Nonsupervisory Workers in Nonmanufacturing Activities, Washington State

	Preliminary May Production Workers & Nonsupervisory Workers	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
		May 90	Apr 90	May 89	May 90	Apr 90	May 89	May 90	Apr 90	May 89
TOTAL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES[1]	215,852	$516.84	$514.56	$501.43	40.6	40.2	41.0	$12.73	$12.80	$12.23
SELECTED MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES										
Lumber and Wood Products	33,766	$458.14	$476.02	$456.60	41.2	42.2	40.3	$11.12	$11.28	$11.33
Primary Metal Industries	10,273	$570.14	$583.80	$525.41	42.9	43.6	41.6	$13.29	$13.39	$12.63
Fabricated Metal Products	9,647	$504.71	$506.85	$497.21	42.7	42.7	41.4	$11.82	$11.87	$12.01
Machinery	19,970	$420.42	$411.48	$380.72	39.7	38.6	39.7	$10.59	$10.66	$9.59
Food and Kindred Products	26,377	$358.59	$339.77	$356.81	38.6	34.6	38.7	$9.29	$9.82	$9.22
Chemical and Allied Products	4,616	$662.02	$681.81	$629.83	41.9	43.4	41.3	$15.80	$15.71	$15.25
Transportation Equipment	59,387	$652.13	$649.57	$635.60	42.1	42.4	44.2	$15.49	$15.32	$14.38
SELECTED NONMANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES										
Construction	88,168	$657.42	$627.15	$618.06	38.2	37.0	37.3	$17.21	$16.95	$16.57
Wholesale and Retail Trade (Includes eating and drinking places)	461,401	$276.94	$286.37	$263.07	30.5	31.4	30.1	$9.08	$9.12	$8.74

[1]Average hourly earnings for all manufacturing production workers reported in this table do not exactly reflect the official US Bureau of Labor Statistics definition of "wages." While these data still constitute a valid economic indicator series, they should not be used at this time for the negotiation of contracts whose monetary provisions may depend upon official US Bureau of Labor Statistics hourly earning data.

Washington State
Employment Security
Labor Market and
Economic Analysis Branch
212 Maple Park
Mail Stop KG-11
Olympia, WA 98504-5311

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